LA CARTA

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Coming Out, Standing Out

Excerpted from Hispanic (June 1994)
By David James Rose

Despite the pervasiveness of political correctiveness that has made a noticeable difference in how different lifestyles are now regarded, leading a gay or lesbian lifestyle is still difficult. For Hispanics, however, being gay or lesbian can be doubly difficult: In Hispanic households, discussions about sexuality, in general- let alone alternative versions of it - are taboo.

The collective American consciousness is only now beginning to grapple with same sex attraction. Hispanic activists explain that obstacles around for people who are gay, lesbian, and bisexual *and* Hispanic. Possible language barriers, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, differences in educational levels, even ideological exclusion from mainstream gay and lesbian organizations, makes a Hispanic's pursuit of this alternative lifestyle that much more challenging, especially at a time when the Hispanic community is disproportionately threatened by AIDS.

Perhaps "recognition" is the buzzword for the Hispanic gay and lesbian movement of the nineties-recognition as being worthy of legal protection, health care, and educational opportunities. Recognition of the lifestyle , however, may be the hardest for Hispanics to achieve in the one area that is critical to Hispanic culture and identity: the family.

If Hispanic parents and family don't reject outright the alternative lifestyles that their gay sons and daughters have chosen, they sometimes simply chose not to believe the news.

Many Hispanic lesbians and gays believe in themselves, however, and a more outspoken community voice is beginning to emerge as a result. The visibility of Hispanic lesbians and gays is growing according to Gomez, a 39-year-old Texas native who is executive director of the National Latino/ and Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGO). The group recently received a federal grant to provide Hispanic gay and lesbian organizations with technical assistance for HIV prevention. "There are now [as of 1993] about 47 gay and lesbian Latino

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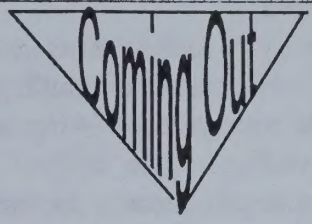

by Ziva Branstetter (Transcribed from the 6/10/93 issue of the Philadelphia Daily News' "Fresh Ink" supplement)

"Mom, Dad, sit down, I have something to tell you...I'm gay. "If you are a gay teen, you may have rehearsed this speech in your mind for years. Once the words are out, your relationship with your parents may be changed forever, so you need to do some serious thinking about it first. There are some questions gay teens need to ask themselves before they come out to their parents, according to the national group Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. **Are you sure you're gay?** Don't raise the issue unless you are able to answer that question, which

Catch Actor Wilson Cruz of "My So-called-life" who just came out in the Advocate on Thursdays

your parents are likely to ask. It's OK to be confused about your sexual orientation. Most experts say you will eventually know in your heart whether you are gay. **Can you be patient?** You may

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English Only? Sure Why Not?

Really, when is the last time you spoke on the issue either way? Why is it even important? Do you care? Would an "English Only" government really serve some outdated notions of nationalistic pride **OR** would it aspire to eradicate a vital facet of cultural identity? *And hey, I may be proud to be a proud La Guia member, but I am not speaking of one culture.. I mean any culture - African American, Asian, gay, straight..* Can an entity function without language? No way! Attempting to restrict (any) language is parallel to abridging some very basic human rights.

Phew. Now that I've gotten your attention - I'm not writing this to take you on some guilt trip; I'm one of thousands of people across the nation sounding a cry- **change is coming!** For the first time in years (three presidential administrations to be exact) opportunities to create and support federal laws protecting "language rights" are here! Where do you ask? At the end of September, Congress signed into law the new and improved "Elementary and Secondary Education Act."

What?.. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act! And what does that mean? Good question! Scripted in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act are new appropriations in the Title VII funding and structure. OK, So what the heck is Title VII? Well, in a very loose nutshell it's the equivalent of the Bilingual Education Act. ..**and what that means , in terms of education, is:**

1.Reagan's baby (SAIP) or "English Only" language programs are finally out the door!

Look out for "I like it like that" from Columbia pictures which has a splash of Latino and Transsexual in it.

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2. There is a fundamental shift in changing bilingual Ed programs from remedial ("remedio" need to be fixed) programs to enrichment programs. The final goal being bilingualism not homogenization.

3. Language programs won't be targeted towards individual students but towards w h o l e schools and communities.

And now you say - "Well that's all good, but I don't even know any body in grade school, so it really doesn't effect me". Ah ha, that's where you're wrong! If you're at all concerned of effected (and trust me, even when you don't know it you are effected) by "language rights", these changes in education are creating the foundation for bigger things. i.e. Under a republican governor, New Mexico founded the goal that

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have known you are gay for years, so you may be used to the idea, but your parents may need time to deal with it. It may take years for them to accept the fact. **What is your motive for coming out?** Never come out in anger or during an argument in order to shock your parents. **Do you have accurate information about homosexuality?** Be prepared to counter their assumptions about gay people. **What is your general relationship with your parents?** If you have gotten along well in other matters, chances are the news will be easier for them to take. **What is your family's moral view about homosexuality?** If your parents say they believe homosexuality is morally wrong, it might be wise to wait until you are on your own to tell them. If you do tell them, be aware that they may not understand. **How much do you depend financially on your parents?** Is it possible that they would cut you off financially, refusing to pay for college? If so, it might be smart to wait. **Do you have support?** If you plan to tell your parents, make sure there are people you can turn to for help. Being a teenager is hard enough. Being a gay teenager is even harder. Don't feel like you have to go it alone, because there's lots of us out here who have been through the whole self-awareness/coming out process. We can help.

Politicas

Anti- PBS campaign

The American Family Association has zeroed in on Public Television. Congress will take up legislation to reauthorize the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. A similar tactic was taken to attack the National Endowment of the Arts. The campaign is being propelled on that infinite supply of homophobia, PBS being the scapegoat for showing positive homosexual programs. But what can you do? Call 1-800-356-2626 to register your support for Public Broadcasting. Or if you're really concerned, write Senator Hank Brown, Senator Campbell or Rep. Joel Hefley.

Employment Non-Discrimination Act

In June Senator Kennedy (D) and Senator Cafee (R) introduced this bill which prohibits the discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation. The exemptions are: Military personal, employees of religious organizations, and businesses with less than 15 people

HELMS CONTINUES ANTI-GAY CRUSADE IN U.S. SENATE

Washington, DC -- (August 2, 1994) -- Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) again used the Senate floor as a stage for political gay-bashing by supporting an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that would ban federal funds to be used in schools that "carry out a program or activity that has either the purpose or effect of encouraging or supporting homosexuality as a positive lifestyle alternative." The amendment, introduced by Sen. Bob Smith (R-NH) would cover the distribution of instructional materials, counseling and referral of students to outside organizations. It passed in a 63-36 vote. The Senate then passed in a 99-0 vote a related but conflicting amendment, introduced by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), that would ban the use of federal funds to promote sexual activity, whether heterosexual or homosexual. "The Smith/Helms amendment, if signed into law, will have direct and disastrous impact on gay, lesbian and bisexual youth," said NGLTF Executive Director Peri Jude Radecic. "Studies indicate that gay youth are more likely to attempt suicide because of the societal prejudice and hatred exemplified by Senators Smith and Helms."

The Smith/Helms amendment is one in a series of recent measures introduced by Sen. Helms attacking the gay and lesbian community. The Final Bill will come before congress in the fall. You can call Senator **Hank Brown** who voted **for** the Helms amendment and express your madness. On a happier day you can call up **Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell** and thank

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to give *him* "el paesame" - condolences. A comforting shoulder gave way to much needed sobs, but still nobody spoke the whole truth. We all politely pray an cry when we feel like screaming-why? *Que verguenza.* You tell me, honestly, where is the shame?

No more time for regrets..the "I should have's". The list is getting longer and the clock is still ticking. No more silence, no more maybe's. I caught myself flipping through my daytimer..planning the next few months around peoples hospital visits. This monster we call *SIDA/AIDS* is becoming a teacher of many things. I remember when I used to be able to count those it had effects MY friends, MY family- on one hand. And now? *..ay dios.*

Oh Tito, I'm tired of burying my friends, mi familia. I know we all got to go sometime, but SHIT, so soon? - and like this?

I close my eyes and see you at peace.

The time of wearing a quiet little ribbon is passing.

I miss you-

bye.

Remember!

November 8th is your chance to vote! It's only your future on the line!

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"Every student graduating from New Mexico schools shall be proficient in two languages by the year 2000"- they'll be bilingual. Now, with a state mandate promoting bilingualism how likely do you think it will be to support, much less pass, restrictive "English Only" laws/

Now I know I kind of simplified things. Nothing in life is cut and dry, black and white. Changes this fundamental are slow to come by, and quite often difficult to maintain. The door of opportunity is being pried open, but by no means are we able to hop through it. So what can you do about it? Well for starters..find out how your congressman voted on the ESEA act, and voice your support (or opposition). How are your local schools addressing this issue? Spread the word!

It has been a fair prediction that by the year 2000 major federal rulings, in regards to education/language programs, will be in place. It is my sincere wish that in five years we won't be moaning and groaning because we don't have the freedom to live with our express ourselves in the language of our choice (or for some of us, our primary language). De prisa, hurry..the clock is ticking!

Rozx

Our Motto:

"Diversity through Inclusion"

Our Mission:

La Guia is a cultural awareness and advocacy service organization that encourages the inclusion of Hispano/ Latino Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transgendered, Gays, and their friends by providing a diverse forum that is both autonomous and interactive within the greater Gay and Lesbian community.

Our Vision:

We envision a Gay and Lesbian community that is educated and respectful of the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity within the Hispano/ Latino community, and who are aware of the benefits of maintaining a pluralistic society.

Our Description:

We represent Hispano/Latino Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transgendered, Gays, and their friends from a variety of backgrounds throughout Colorado who are dedicated to the unification and education of the Gay and Lesbian community at large, and who believe in the mission statement of La Guia.

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him for voting **against** the amendment. All you have to do is call 1-800-768-2221. The operator will say "Capitol" and you ask for your senator or congressman. This 1-800 number has been graciously provided by supporters of Senator Jesse Helms, **so use it!**

State Election

An amendment making censorship legal will be on the upcoming ballot this November. Yes, of course the wonderful gay books you see in our public libraries will be the first to go. The wording goes something like this *"To the full extent permitted by the first Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, the promotion of obscenity may be controlled by the state and any city, town, city and county, or any country."* The number given to the amendment is unknown at this time but just look for this wording and vote **NO** to defeat this censorship.

Joint Forces

Equality Colorado and The Colorado Human Rights Action Council have joined forces. The new organization, E-CHRAC , will be lobbying to influence bills related to gay, lesbian and transgendered equal rights, to fight against AIDS, and to increase the constituent lobby. Definately a positive force much needed in Colorado.